



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Drought Update

SALT LAKE CITY (July 29, 2022) – Storms over the past couple of weeks are not benefitting the state as they normally would due to long-term drought conditions. Soil moisture has seen improvements and is trending slightly above normal for this time of year. The monsoon is helping many parts of the state hold off further drought degradation. According to the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#), 83.56% of the state is in extreme drought or worse.

“Despite recent monsoons that have brought much-needed rain to some areas of the state, hot, bone dry conditions continue to bake our parched vegetation,” said Joel Ferry, acting executive director of the Department of Natural Resources. “With temperatures in the triple digits and high winds, it doesn’t take much to spark a destructive wildfire. We need people to use good [Fire Sense](#) and help stretch our water supply.”

At-a-glance highlights:

- On July 3, the level of Great Salt Lake dropped below the October 2021 historic low elevation. This average daily surface elevation, 4190.1, was measured at USGS [station 10010000](#), located on the southern end of the lake and is associated with a data record dating back to 1847. View press release [here](#). The current elevation of Great Salt Lake is 4189.8, this number is based on a 7-day average.
- Recreators should check reservoir levels before they head out. Conditions vary, and some [boat ramp closures](#) are in place due to low water levels.
- In all there have been 642 total fire starts this year with 351 of them determined to be human-caused. This number is down from 440 at this same time last year.
- Twenty-one of Utah’s largest 45 reservoirs are below 55% of available capacity. Overall statewide storage is 54% of capacity.



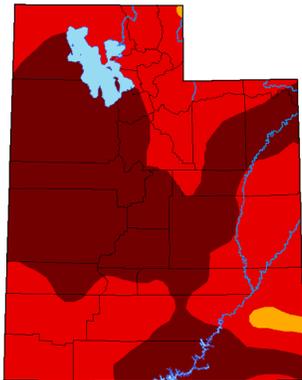
- Last year, Jordanelle Reservoir only rose 21,650 acre-feet. This year over three times that amount reached the reservoir. Reservoir levels are still low due to years of drought, but we appreciate that more water made it to the reservoirs.
- **Five streams are flowing at record low conditions.** Streamflows are lower than normal due to low snowpack.
- According to the latest information released by the U.S. Drought Monitor, drought conditions continue to plague the state, with 83.56% of the state experiencing “Extreme” or “exceptional” drought conditions. Extreme and exceptional drought conditions are the Drought Monitor’s most serious categories.
- Residents looking for tips on how to help reduce water consumption can be found at SlowtheFlow.Org.

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FULL REPORT

U.S. Drought Monitor
Utah

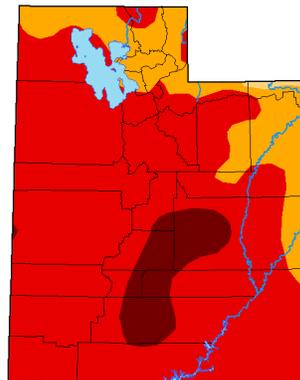
July 27, 2021



2021

U.S. Drought Monitor
Utah

July 26, 2022
(Released Thursday, Jul. 28, 2022)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



2022

Intensity:
 None
 D0 Abnormally Dry
 D1 Moderate Drought
 D2 Severe Drought
 D3 Extreme Drought
 D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

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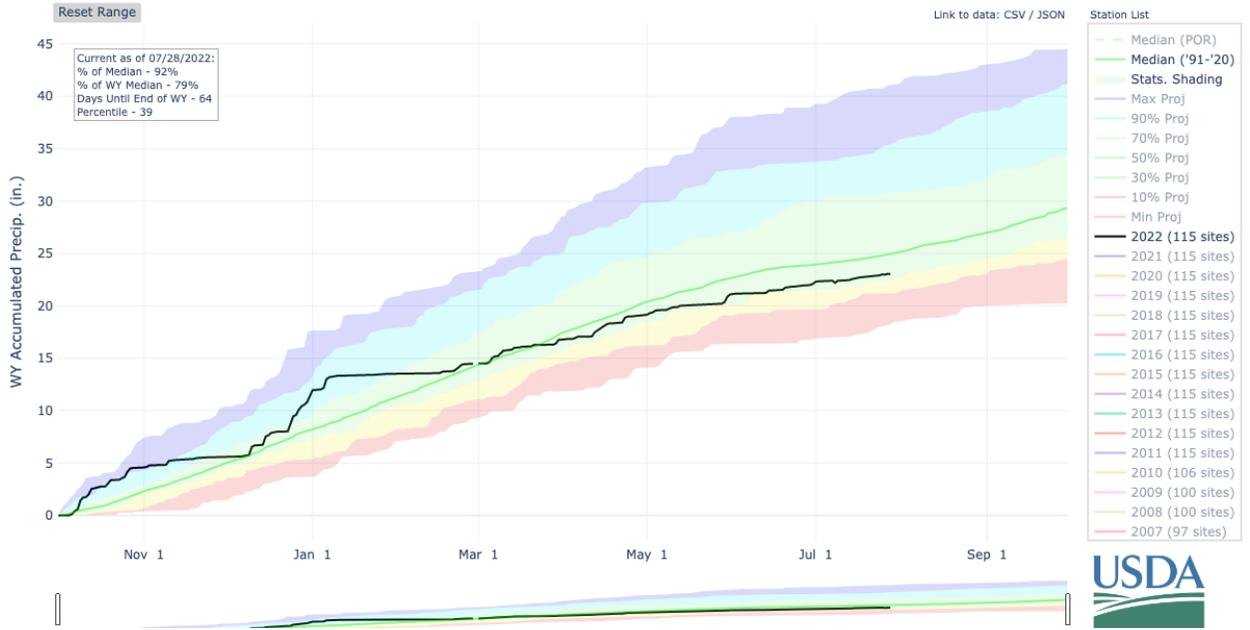


Graphic compares Utah’s current drought situation to 2021. Exceptional drought (the worst category) covers 7.76% of the state. Last year at this time 52.30% of the state was in exceptional drought.

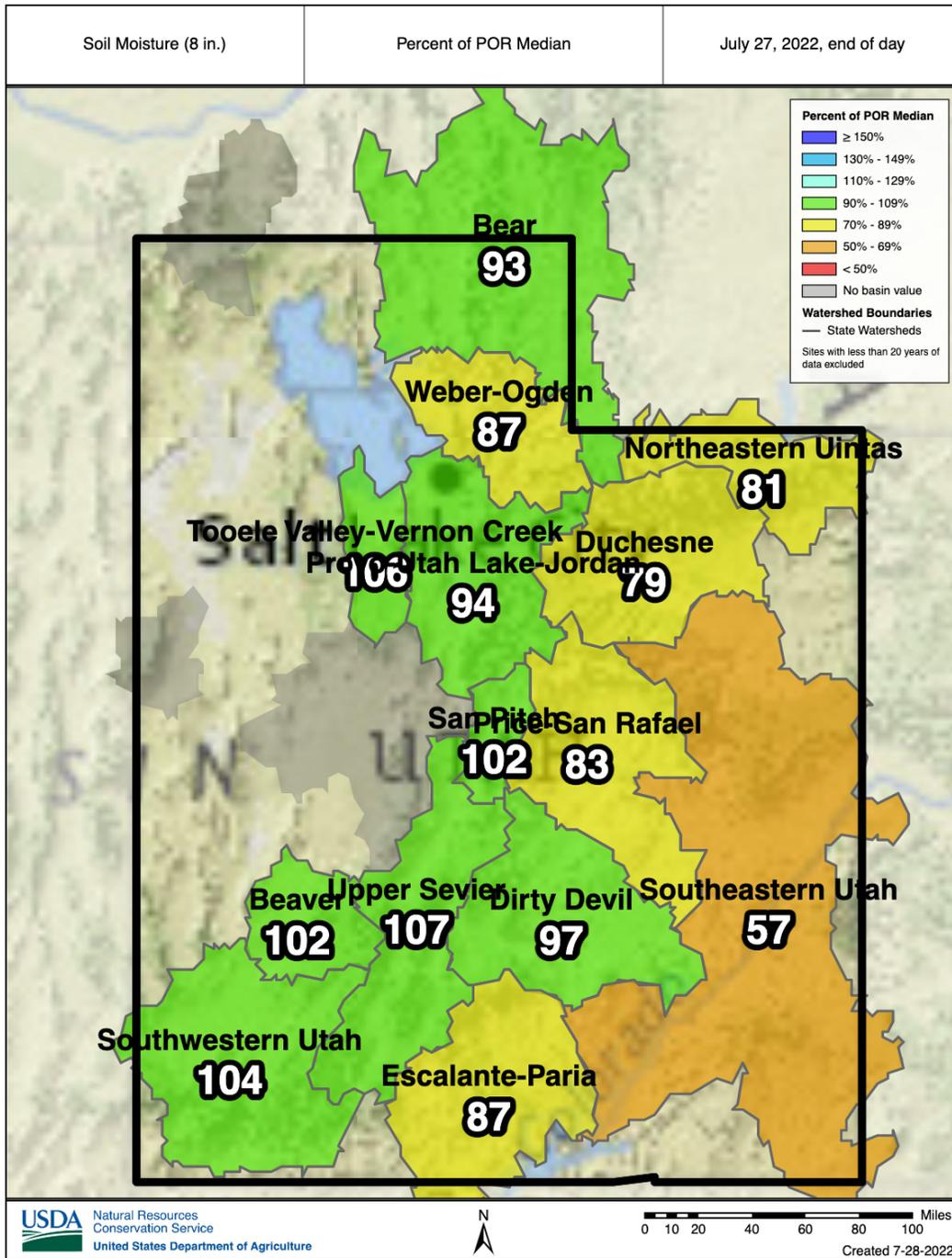
Precipitation and soil moisture

- Soil moisture has seen improvements and is trending slightly above normal for this time of year. The monsoon is helping many parts of the state hold off further drought degradation.
- Spring runoff is nearly over, causing streamflow levels to decline. Snowpack was 25% below average, and runoff was not enough to refill our reservoirs. Reservoirs are not expected to significantly increase until next spring.
- The monsoon is shifted more to the east than it normally would be, this is why the western part of the state has not seen much precipitation.

PRECIPITATION PROJECTIONS IN STATE OF UTAH



Total Precipitation is below typical for this time of year. Precipitation statewide has been lower than normal since late April.



Soil moisture based on regions; some areas are in a better situation than others.

Temperature and Evaporation

- Temperatures over the last two weeks were above average over nearly all of the state. Around the Great Salt Lake, temperatures were significantly higher than average.
- Evaporation was slightly less than typical in most areas of the state. Two areas in the northwest and southeast part of the state did have higher evapotranspiration. Evapotranspiration is essentially how thirsty the air is for water.

Streamflows

- Due to low snowpack, streamflows are flowing lower than normal. This means our reservoirs won't fill as they normally would.
- Five streams had their seven-day average flow reach record low.

Reservoir and Lake Levels

- Reservoir storage statewide continues to drop and now averages 54%. Twenty-one of Utah's 45 reservoirs are below 55% of available capacity.
- Current statewide reservoir levels are about where they were last year at this time (54%) and lower than the median for this time of year (75%). There are about two months remaining in the irrigation season when water use is traditionally at its peak.
- This year, reservoir storage started quite a bit lower than last year. With current reservoir storage close to last year's percentage, this means much more water made it to our streams and reservoirs.
- On July 3, the level of Great Salt Lake dropped below the October 2021 historic low elevation. This average daily surface elevation, 4190.1, was measured at USGS [station 10010000](#), located on the southern end of the lake and is associated with a data record dating back to 1847. View press release [here](#).

Department of Environmental Quality

- High temperatures and drought conditions have caused an increase in the number of harmful algal blooms (HABs) throughout the state over the past week. Visitors are advised to check habs.utah.gov for current conditions and report suspicious algae.
- Do not swim, water ski, or drink the water, clean fish well and discard guts, and keep animals away from the following water bodies:
 - Warning Advisories
 - Mantua Reservoir, Bountiful Pond, East Canyon Reservoir, Scofield Reservoir, Otter Creek Reservoir, Bake Reservoir, Willis Creek, Big East Lake, the North Fork of the Virgin River (including the Narrows), Lincoln Marina, Utah Lake State Park, Sandy Beach, and Provo Bay at Utah Lake.
 - Health Watch
 - Matt Warner Reservoir, La Verkin Creek (Zion National Park)

Wildfire Risks

- Monsoonal moisture continues to impact the state with the southern part of the state reporting fuel moisture at normal level for this time of the year.
- Thunderstorms are expected for most of central and northern Utah this week which raises the chance of lightning strike starts. So far this year these starts have been contained to 0.1 acres.
- In all there have been 642 total starts this year with 351 of them determined to be human-caused. This number is down from 440 starts this same time last year.

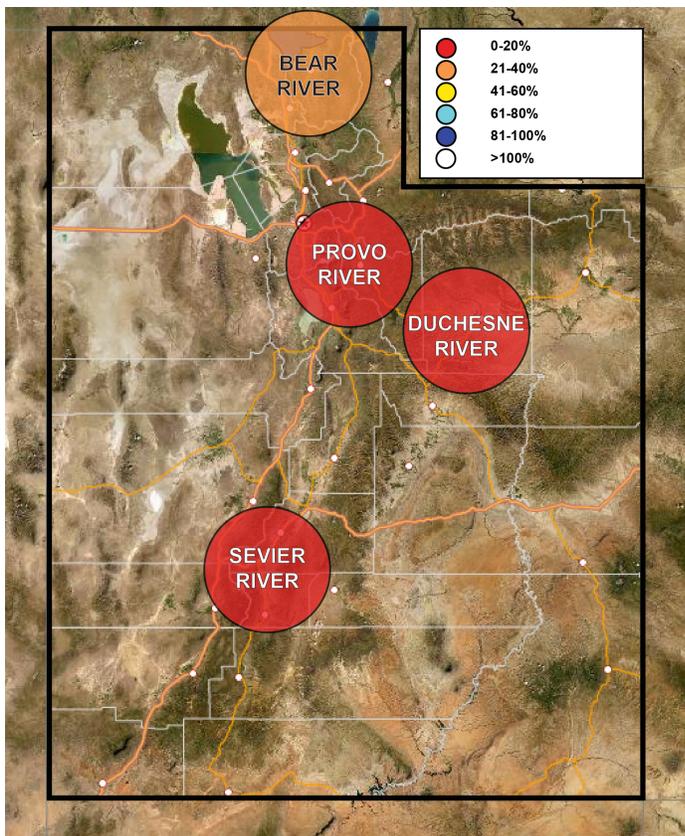
Water Rights

Overview of the State of Surface Water Rights

Surface water rights in Utah are limited by the available natural flow in the river system. As conditions get drier, the flow diminishes and fewer water rights can be satisfied. Because Utah water law follows the prior appropriation doctrine, older (senior) water rights have preference—or “priority”—over younger (junior) water rights.

The four systems identified below (i.e., Bear River, Duchesne River, Provo River, and Sevier River) are a good representation of the various river systems throughout the state. The percentages shown in the table are based on the total amount of water rights. For example, 38% of the water rights on the Bear River system are currently being satisfied. River Commissioners oversee these systems to ensure water is being diverted by those entitled to receive it according to their priority dates.

Since the water supply varies each year, we have provided data for the current year with data from the same day for the previous three. For example, last year at this time, only 18% of the water rights on the Bear River system were being satisfied. In 2019, however, 93% of rights were being satisfied. Please note, when a system shows a number greater than 100%, it means that all water rights on the system are being satisfied and additional water is being stored in reservoirs.



Bear River	Rights Satisfied	Stream Flow
2022	38%	531 <u>cfs</u>
2021	18%	260 <u>cfs</u>
2020	60%	852 <u>cfs</u>
2019	93%	1315 <u>cfs</u>

Provo River	Rights Satisfied	Stream Flow
2022	20%	91 <u>cfs</u>
2021	10%	46 <u>cfs</u>
2020	17%	76 <u>cfs</u>
2019	33%	152 <u>cfs</u>

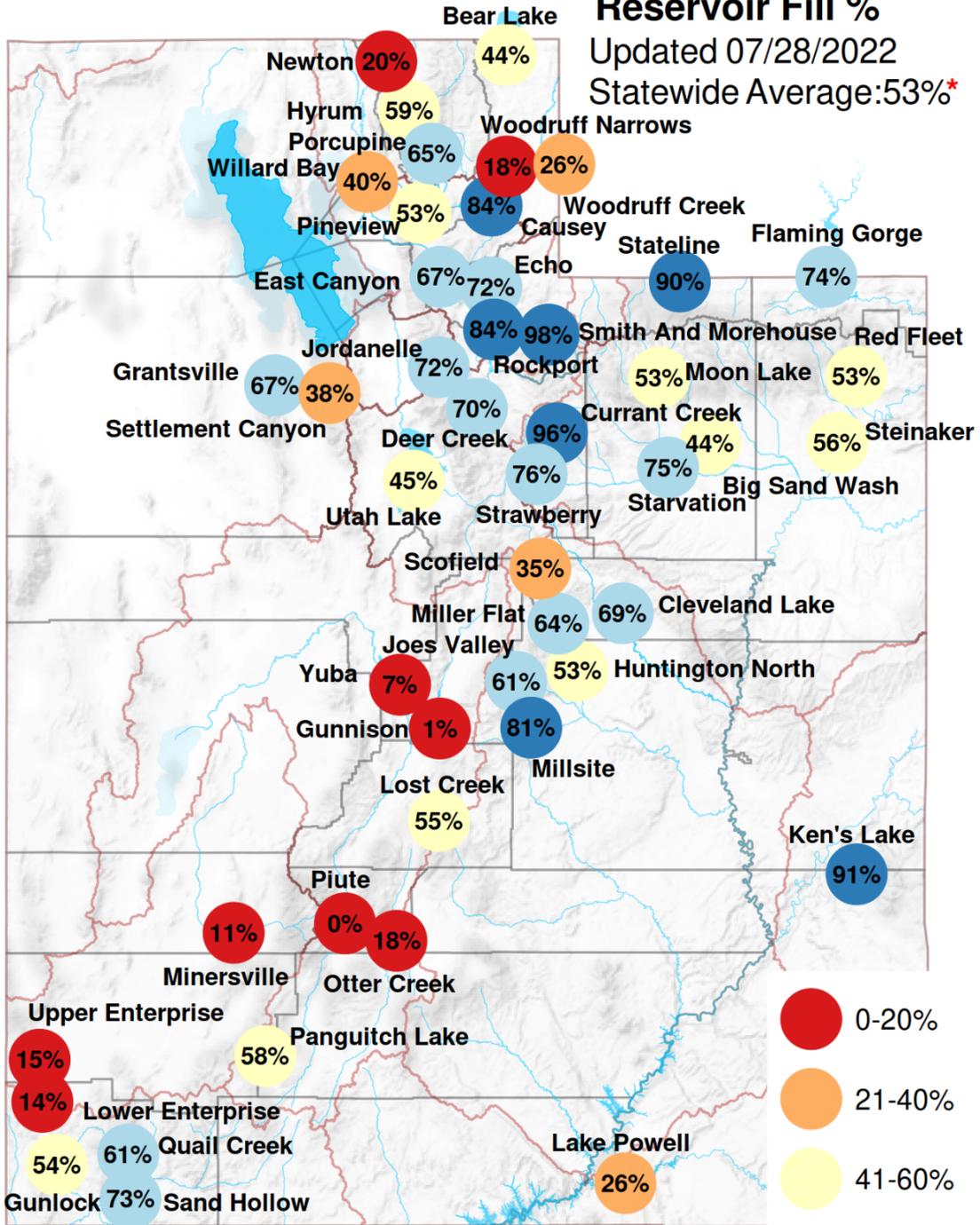
Duchesne River	Rights Satisfied	Stream Flow
2022	20%	213 <u>cfs</u>
2021	15%	152 <u>cfs</u>
2020	29%	304 <u>cfs</u>
2019	68%	705 <u>cfs</u>

Sevier River	Rights Satisfied	Stream Flow
2022	17%	68 <u>cfs</u>
2021	16%	64 <u>cfs</u>
2020	20%	80 <u>cfs</u>
2019	34%	139 <u>cfs</u>

Reservoir Fill %

Updated 07/28/2022

Statewide Average: 53%*



Data Sources: water.utah.gov/reservoirlevels

*State average excludes Lake Powell & Flaming Gorge to better represent the state's water supply.

Total capacity including these is 42%

